

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective iEARN Project Facilitators

Habit One: Be Proactive.

"Proactive people are smart, they're value driven, they read reality, and they know what's needed."

Sometimes the way we see the problem is the problem. Educators wanting to learn how to effectively facilitate the iEARN projects need to believe in themselves and look at teaching situations their own as well as be sensitive to the needs of participating students and teachers from every angle in order. This will help them to decide what action will help them integrate the project in the right direction and how important it is for a facilitator to be there in the forums for continuous support .

- Don't announce a project and have your name as a facilitator unless you really want to, have time for it and see a need for it. Once it is launched ensure you are there for continuous support in the forums.

Find ways to schedule online time. Even small blocks or infrequent access is better than none at all. Log in for smaller period of time if you have to, but the key is to log in be there and interact.

Habit Two: Begin With The End In Mind.

"To begin with the end in mind means to start with an understanding of your destination. It means to know where you're going so that you better understand where you are now and so that the steps you take are always in the right direction."

Start with a clearly stated end-goal, expressed in terms of the exact or possible project outcomes. Focus on the outcome you want to achieve. Guide participants towards achieving the project outcomes and suggest or help them design activities to reach these goals e.g lesson plans, classroom activities, tips and suggestions.

Begin by making some generalistic lesson plans, templates or participation tips for your project. This will attract more participation since the participating students and teachers gets some guidelines. Think about doing some of the following and inviting others to post some of their own samples, this will create a great pool of resources for your project ensuring success.

- Reference material to print out for student use
- Lessons or materials for use for the projects
- Student activities or interactive sites
- Sites to use for student research

All effective iEARN project facilitators plan and plan well, creating different scenarios to cover the ways that project might go. Developing and using the resources for the project means planning and being prepared in the same way that you would plan for using a new text or video or science experiment. This type of planning is nothing new for a good teacher or educationist.

Know what your objectives are for your project and seek out the resources to help you meet them. Make sure the students also know their objectives for using the forums. That is the best way to keep everyone on task and ensure effective use of online time.

The use of any new strategy takes time to perfect. Realize there are management skills, scheduling, and new ways of approaching curriculum which will be more consistently effective with the use of project forum and interacting with other participants .

Habit Three: Put First Things First.

"Don't prioritize your schedule, instead...schedule your priorities."

-Covey

First address all the issues on the project's critical path – that is how to participate and then when the project postings starts to appear respond to them and then attend to any other issues.

For teachers their students are the number one priority. If you believe that integrating and facilitating an iEARN online project can bring the real world issues, up-to-date information, rich primary source material and all of the other benefits you have heard that integrating the iEARN project can bring to a classroom, then focus on its use as a professional goal. This will help you set aside the time to prepare and schedule the facilitation time needed.

- Start with collaborating with your co facilitators.
- Look for ways to meet them online on a regular basis discussing project progression.
- Divide tasks related to forum facilitation among each other. If one of the facilitator is not available or has slacked, think about replacement immediately.
- Decide on a fair amount of presence in the forums , meaning how much each of you are required to be , interact and support the participants online.
- Bring equity to your forums. Have suggestions and support for those who do not have plenty online access at home/school. Have several alternates available to them for online interactions.
- The worse thing a facilitator could do is to be unavailable and non responsive in forums.

Habit Four: Think Win-Win.

An iEARN Project success is defined in terms of the issue it is focusing, participants maximum participation, timely completion, social action and a good quality outcomes, website, booklet, any other print material, exhibition and display etc. All the participants need to be satisfied and get support and opportunity from the facilitators to participate fully achieving the goals - compromise is not an option.

In iEARN interactive forum setting interactions with students and colleagues are paramount, "win/win" is a most important philosophy. The win/win process has four steps:

- See the problem from others' point of view, in terms of their needs
- Identify the key issues and concerns
- Determine what end results would make the best acceptable solution(s)
- Identify options to achieve those results
- Share the success with everyone which made it a success

Consider working with a co facilitator and some students in your project who can bring their expertise and ideas to your project venture. Planning with others and developing a team approach can help all contributors. Like wise be willing to reach out and help others learn from your experiences or share in lessons you develop. We all win when we can share and learn from as well as with others.

Work with students to help them understand their responsibilities in using the project forum. Evaluation of sources, organizing information and other information processing skills students need to use and you need to teach will be critical skills for the 21st century. Don't be afraid to learn side-by-side with your project participants. Seeing how they react and interact with online discussions can help you revamp your facilitation strategies and restructure your project and improve upon it.

Habit Five: Seek First To Understand, Then To Be Understood.

"Seeking first to understand, diagnosing before you prescribe, is hard but it's the mark of all true professionals."

-Covey

Read the postings empathically. Get inside the other person's frame of reference so you respond/react with one purpose - to understand. Then work on ensuring that you clearly communicate your thoughts and ideas.

Open the door to the potential that exists in participants by finding out what it is that will make a win/win situation for them. Providing the rich resources focused at the project for

their use, engaging in a collaborative online discussion, participating in challenging activities/contests , making information available in new/exciting ways, or providing opportunities for "authentic" research may be the key to reaching the potential waiting to be unlocked.

Habit Six: Synergize.

Synergy means the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The essence or key is to build on strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Synergistic communication means opening your mind to new possibilities and realizing that your new creative endeavors may be somewhat unpredictable.

Become a team player with your participants. Build a safe environment which encourages risk-taking, experimentation, creative endeavor and use of the information available online. Work in collaborative groups. Encourage team projects, brainstorming and idea sharing. Bring colleagues, country coordinators, school officials, iEARN Executive Council and others into your forum on line. Perhaps someone has expertise to share on which will help you. Perhaps a colleague has an upcoming unit on a topic which your students can research. Together you can achieve much more than working in isolation

Habit Seven: Sharpen The Saw.

"Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be."

Goethe

Sharpening the saw refers to a commitment to continuous improvement in each of the four aspects of human existence: Physical, Mental, Spiritual, and Social-Emotional. The process of continuous improvement is essential for schools and also for those who work inside of them. Educators must continually renew themselves, moving upward in the spiral of growth and change.

Post-implementation review - or even more frequently, have participants in your project forum talk about their experiences, challenges and what can be done to improve the participation and enhance the quality of project outcomes.

Affirm the proactive nature of your students by treating them as responsible people. Support them, appreciate them and help them become confident, independent learners of an online community. Let them develop research questions and activities to investigate. Help them to design products to demonstrate their learning.

Never stop learning yourself. Read professional journals and books. Attend workshops and in service sessions, continually interact in the iEARN facilitators forum about using the online collaborative projects "sharpen" your skills and learn new ones. Research new

topics online. Learn to create your own website to publish student work. Find time for yourself to better yourself.